

CA2 QN
SD
- 79F12

Government
Publications

THE FAMILY AS A FOCUS FOR SOCIAL POLICY



May, 1979



Ontario

The Honourable Margaret Birch
Provincial Secretary
for Social Development

"Think about the Family"

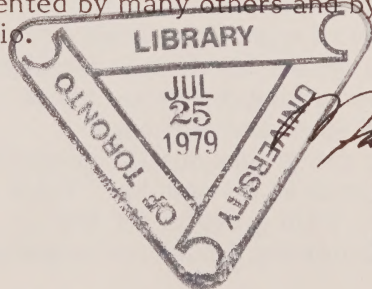


Families should be the focus for social policies in Ontario. This paper is intended to be part of a province-wide discussion about this principle and what it means for Ontario families.

In making plans for a far-reaching discussion about families in Ontario, I shared my ideas and this paper with a number of organizations and groups outside government. These bodies had been participants at my seminar "Think About the Family" in May 1977. I am grateful for the assistance and interest of the following groups and organizations:

Alliance for Children - Ontario
 Anglican Church of Canada
 L'Association Canadienne-Française de l'Ontario
 Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec
 Big Brothers Association of Canada
 Big Sisters Association of Canada
 Canadian Institute of Religion and Gerontology
 Canadian Red Cross (Ontario)
 Catholic Women's League
 Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints
 Eastern Canada Synod of Lutheran Church of America
 National Council of Jewish Women
 Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies
 Ontario Association of Family Service Agencies
 Ontario Welfare Council
 Ontario Women's Institutes
 Pensioners Concerned Inc.
 Presbyterian Church of Canada
 Provincial Council of Women
 Roman Catholic Church of Ontario
 St. Elizabeth Visiting Nurses Association
 Salvation Army
 United Church of Canada
 United Senior Citizens of Ontario
 Victorian Order of Nurses
 Visiting Homemakers Association

All have indicated that they would like to be involved in a continuing discussion about families and social policies in Ontario. It is the sincere hope of the Ontario government that these interested groups and organizations will be augmented by many others and by families throughout Ontario.



Margaret Birch

Margaret Birch,
 Provincial Secretary
 for Social Development.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
WHAT IS A FAMILY?	4
THE FAMILY - A BRIEF HISTORY	7
THE FAMILY - WHAT DOES IT DO?	9
THE FAMILY IN ONTARIO - SOME PRESENT DAY REALITIES	11
FAMILY FORMATION	12
FAMILIES GROW OLD	23
FAMILIES IN THE WORK FORCE	30
FAMILY BREAKUP - THE FIGURES AND FACTS	31
GOING IT ALONE	34
FAMILIES GETTING TOGETHER	38
THE FAMILY AND GOVERNMENT	40
THE FAMILY AND THE COMMUNITY	46
THE FAMILY AS A FOCUS FOR SOCIAL POLICY: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?	53



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2022 with funding from
University of Toronto

<https://archive.org/details/31761114689656>

INTRODUCTION



Of all the world's institutions, none is more important to more people than the family. The term "family" has almost as many meanings as there are individuals in society. All of us, except for a very few professionals, base our understanding of "family" upon personal experience. And that personal experience is changing, at an ever-increasing rate.

Over the last 25 years, trends in social changes have intensified: The elderly now make up an increasing proportion of the population. More wives and mothers are working full-time. More couples are getting divorced. More single-parents are raising families. More families are moving away from their roots, away from the support and co-operation of their aunts and uncles and grandparents who formed an integral part of the traditional extended family.

Social pressures on the family have become a way of life: social acceptance of non-traditional patterns has been broadened; economic pressures have affected

the work force, including wives and mothers; family planning methods and information have been made almost universally available; legal modifications have underlined divorce as a route for dissatisfied marriage partners to take; Ontario as a province has received the impact of a rich variety of cultural and ethnic traditions. While some changes have offered increased personal fulfillment to family members and have often enhanced family life, they have also contributed to a sense of uncertainty about the status and future of the family in society.

Often concerns about family life are intensified because people are unaware of the true statistical picture of families. What do you think about these statistical highlights?

- more people are living in a family situation: 85.7% in 1951; 86.2% in 1976
- families still choose to have children: in 1951 63.9% of families had children; in 1976 it was 65.7%
- family size keeps changing: 1.4 children per family in 1957, 1.6 in 1961 and 1.4 in 1976
- almost half of mothers with school-age children at home work outside the home: 44.5% in 1976
- over half of all families have both spouses working: 54% in 1976
- the divorce rate is climbing: the rate has risen from 3.3 per 100,000 of population in 1921 to 224.9 in 1976
- of Ontario's children one in ten live in single-parent families: 11.8% in 1976

- those over 65 years of age have increased by 85% in 25 years: 400,300 in 1951 and 739,000 in 1976

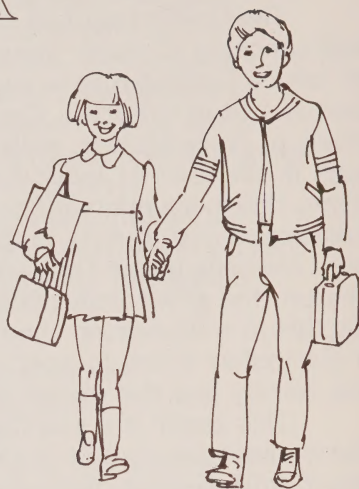
The Government of Ontario, sharing the interest and concerns of many thoughtful citizens, is prepared to take a leading role in supporting and strengthening family life in Ontario. The government recognizes that many of its programs, policies and laws play an important part in the lives of individuals and families. At the same time, there are many other groups and institutions closely concerned with family matters. Government is not the only element in the formation of social policy. For this reason, the government hopes to involve all interested parties in a discussion about the family and its future, a discussion which focuses on the opportunity to enhance the family and the values of independence it represents.

This paper is a starting point. It explores the known facts about family life in Ontario; the definitions of present day families; what other countries are doing about families; what religious groups and other organizations are doing for families; the history of the family; the relationship of families to social policy.

The Honourable Margaret Birch, Provincial Secretary for Social Development and His Honour, Judge Guy Goulard of the Ontario Welfare Council plan to convene a seminar in September, 1979. Approximately 250 representatives of government and private organizations will be welcomed, as well as members of the public. The government hopes that individuals and organizations will want to share their experience and wisdom with government and with families. A frank and open airing of social issues which affect families can only benefit families in Ontario.

This paper can be a beginning for your participation in a discussion about families and the place of families in the formation of social policy.

WHAT IS A FAMILY?



Family life in Ontario takes many forms. In fact, the concept of "family" entertained by each of us is a function of our age, sex, ethnic origin, language, economic position and even the region where we live.

To some people the traditional idealized "nuclear" family of working father, home-making mother and dependent children is the only reality. To others this may be a completely alien idea. Only one factor is constant - that questioning or contradicting a person's private view of family is a most threatening action.

For some people the variety of family life in Ontario may seem exhilarating and refreshing. For others it may present a grave concern. The subject in fact is extremely sensitive. In order to disarm this sensitivity as much as possible, it is wise to recognize that family life can embrace all the configurations of blood and marriage ties and degrees of commitment and permanence.

We must include in our considerations the complex family units established within the various cultural or ethnic groups in the Canadian mosaic. We must not forget those single individuals who have chosen to live apart from the families in which they were raised.

Without compromising the breadth of this principle, however, it is obvious that a discussion of "family" must be based on a definition of what a "family" is. What better place to seek a definition than in Ontario's law? At present these are the family forms which are recognized in Ontario's legislation:

- a married couple with one or more children under 18;
- a single parent with one or more children under 18;
- a married couple with no children or no children under 18;
- an unmarried couple living together in a marriage relationship with or without children under 18;
- children 18 years and older and their parents;
- brothers and sisters and their descendants, aunts and uncles and their descendants, and grandparents.

These relationships can be traced through marriage, blood or adoption. In some cases, a foster child and foster parent could be included.

The following are some Ontario Acts which recognize all or some of these family structures:

- The Family Law Reform Act, 1978, S.O. 1978, c.2

- The Succession Law Reform Act, S.O. 1977,
c.40
- The Child Welfare Act, 1978, S.O. 1978,
c.85
- The Family Benefits Act, R.S.O. 1970,
c.157
- The Children's Law Reform Act, S.O. 1977,
c.41
- The Devolution of Estates Act, R.S.O. 1970,
c.129

The discussion of issues affecting the family may also have to take into account social groups that are not families in the legal sense, but are similar to families. These social entities, for the sake of convenience, might be described as "family style" living. For example, where unrelated persons live together for social or economic reasons, they may be said to assume a "family style" as is the case in group homes. Alternatively, a "family style" mode of life may consist of a household made up of a single person living in constant contact with an extended family. The inclusion of "family style" living may complicate the task of formulating family policy by raising nearly insoluble social issues. However, it may be preferable to take a broad approach, rather than a restrictive one which may exclude issues worth talking about.

THE FAMILY- A BRIEF HISTORY



The word "family" comes to us from the Latin familia, meaning household. Under Roman law, the family was an entity excluded from legal regulation. The law recognized only the head of the family. This sanctity under the law has been maintained for centuries. Everyone is familiar with the English maxim: "A man's home is his castle".

This phrase is a natural outcome of the common law (or judge-made law) doctrine of the "unity of legal personalities". Ontario's basic legal system is premised on English common law. Hence, in Ontario as in many Commonwealth countries, when a man and woman married, they ceased to have independent or separate legal identities. The identities merged. It was said that the husband and wife became one in law. Persons disenchanted with the law would add that the husband was that one!

In the second half of the 19th century, attempts were made to improve the legal position of the wife

as an individual. The first landmark Act was in 1859 -"An Act to Secure to Married Women Certain Separate Rights of Property". These changes allowed married women to hold property as though single. Women, however, were not freed from all the consequences of the doctrine of the union of legal personalities. It was not until 1872, for example, that wives could keep wages from work, instead of owing them to husbands. Only since 1975 have husbands and wives been able to sue one another for negligence. Federal criminal law still excludes matrimonial sexual assault from the definition of rape, although it could be grounds for divorce. In provincial law, the doctrine of the "unity of legal personalities" was abolished in 1978.

Over the last 100 years, the position of children, within households defined by common law, has come under increasing scrutiny. Up until then, their legal status had developed to somewhere between that of a chattel and an employee. This reflected the value to the family unit of the labour of even very young children.

During the development of industrialized society in the Western world, the whole institution of the family and the role of its members underwent profound changes. It was during this time that the "nuclear" family of male wage-earner, female housekeeper and dependent children living together in a separate residence became so prominent in the public mind. Although this is still the accepted and traditional norm in Ontario, it is of very recent origin and has really no more validity than the clan or kinship style of family life that predated it and still exists in many countries outside North America.

What gives the nuclear family its weight in North America is its social credence and legislative legitimacy. The familiar extended family of aunts and uncles and grandparents is equally important in Ontario but perhaps not so clearly recognized.

The constant changes within society make changes in family structures inevitable. But the proven tenacity of the family unit indicates that it will survive. The challenge is to accommodate change without abandoning tradition.

THE FAMILY- WHAT DOES IT DO?



One of the more sophisticated questions arising from the study of family life is this: what is the proper delineation between the responsibilities of families and those of the institutions set up to support the well-being of the individual and society? The answer to this question can come only after a great deal of the kind of discussion that this paper is meant to foster. However, as a starting point, it is valuable to consider the definitions of the various roles of the family, social and economic.

These are the roles that are most commonly recognized:

Procreation: the creation of new human life and the sustenance of that life.

Physical Protection of Family Members: the shielding of family members from physical harm, whether from natural phenomena or human violence.

Normalization of sexual contact: the provision of regular sexual contact for most adult family members, within the social patterns of marriage or cohabitation.

Provision of food and shelter: the sharing of economic resources with family members unable to provide these for themselves.

Socialization of the young: educating children to function effectively in society and as adult members of families.

The provision of love and affection in nurturing family members: the satisfaction of emotional needs in family members through the provision of love, services, resources and time.

Maintenance of social order and continuity: the transference of social patterns and modes of behaviour through generational example.

Regularization of inheritance: the maintenance of continuity in the use of property through familial transfers after the death of family members.

Some of these functions are falling into the domain of public agencies and institutions. While some roles, notably procreation, are still performed entirely by families, many others, such as the maintenance of social order, are carried out increasingly by public bodies. Allocating responsibilities for performing such crucial human functions is a central problem in any policy-making which focuses on the family.

THE FAMILY IN ONTARIO - SOME PRESENT DAY REALITIES



What do statistics tell us about families? Figures reveal many facts which run counter to some popularly held opinions on the state of family life. For example, a casual reading of newspapers or magazines might suggest that membership in families is decreasing. This is not true; it is slightly higher than it was in the 1950's. Similarly, although it is obvious that more marriages break up today than in the past, it is also true that most people stay married and of those who divorce many remarry. Certainly, the birthrate has declined drastically but, at the same time, the actual proportion of families with children increased from 1951 to 1971 and has fallen only slightly since then. These and many more apparent paradoxes are revealed by a close study of statistics under the following classifications:

FAMILY FORMATION

Marriage

The number of marriages in Ontario has increased in both absolute terms and in proportion to population since 1926. In that year there were 23,632 marriages, for a rate of 7.5 per 1,000 of population. In 1976 the figures were 69,364 or 8.4 per 1,000 of population.

Most remarkable figures for individual years were for 1941 when wartime pressures raised the rate of marriages to the all-time high of 11.4 per 1,000 and for 1946 when returning servicemen again boosted the figure above normal. In the last decade, the highest rate was registered in 1972, at 9.2 per 1,000, but has decreased slightly since then, possibly as a result of economic conditions. There seems little doubt, however, that marriage continues to be a popular institution.

Table 1

Marriages in Ontario For Selected Years

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Marriages</u>	<u>Rate per 1,000 Population</u>
1921	24,871	8.5
1926	23,632	7.5
1941	43,270	11.4
1946	46,073	11.3
1951	45,198	9.8
1961	44,434	7.1
1971	69,590	9.0
1976	69,364	8.4

Source: Statistics Canada, Vital Statistics, Vol. 11, 1976, Cat. 84-205 Annual, Table 1, pp. 2-3

People are marrying younger than they did fifty years ago, although not by much. In 1921, the average age of brides was 25.9. In 1976, the age was 25.1. By 1976, the average age of first-time brides (excluding widows and divorcees) was 22.8 years; for grooms it was 25.1. Indications are that the average age is tending upward again.

Table 2

Mean Age of Marriage in Ontario for Selected Years

<u>Year</u>	<u>Brides</u>	<u>Grooms</u>
1921	25.9	29.7
1941	24.2	27.2
1951	25.4	28.3
1968	24.4	26.9
1976	25.1	28.2

Source: Statistics Canada, Vital Statistics Vol. 11, 1976, Cat. 840205, Table 2 p. 4-5

Table 3

Mean Age of Marriage of Never Married Persons in Ontario for Selected Years

<u>Year</u>	<u>Brides</u>	<u>Grooms</u>
1941	24.2	27.2
1951	23.7	26.3
1961	22.8	25.6
1971	22.6	24.9
1976	22.8	25.1

Source: Statistics Canada, Vital Statistics, Vol. 11, 1976, Cat. 84-205, Table 2 p.4

Births

The term "baby-boom" is familiar to all of us. Likewise, we are all aware that the boom is over and that the birth-rate in Ontario has fallen in recent years. It is apparent when the statistics are studied that the concept of family planning has become a reality. However, the fact is that despite a radically reduced birth rate, proportionately more families in Ontario have children now than they did in 1951.

In that year, births averaged 25.0 per 1,000 of population. In 1957, the figure had risen appreciably to a peak of 26.8 per 1,000. By 1971, the figure was down to 16.9 per 1,000. By 1976, births averaged 14.8 per 1,000 population. Family size measured by the number of children has decreased correspondingly. In 1961, the average number of children per family was 1.6. This increased to 1.7 in 1966 but by 1976 had decreased to 1.4. The most interesting statistic of all is that although the proportion of families with no children decreased to a low of 30.4% in 1966 and has risen since, it is still less in 1976 (34.3%) than in 1951 (36.1%). Having children still seems a desirable goal for couples. The change is in the number of children they wish to have.

Table 4

Family Size

<u>Year</u>	<u>Birth rate per 1,000 population</u>	<u>Average No. of children per family</u>	<u>Proportion of families with no children</u>
1951	25.0	1.4	36.1
1956	26.6	1.5	34.2
1961	25.3	1.6	31.5
1966	19.0	1.7	30.4
1971	16.9	1.6	31.6
1976	14.8	1.4	34.3

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of 1951 to 1976 and Ontario, Vital Statistics 1969 and 1974

Table 5

Live Births in Ontario

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Live Births</u>	<u>Rate per per 1,000 Population</u>	<u>Born to Unmarried Mothers</u>	<u>Rate per 1,000 Live Births</u>
1951	114,827	25.0	3,807	33.2
1961	157,663	25.3	5,456	34.6
1971	130,395	16.9	8,492	65.1
1976	122,700	14.8	9,301	75.8
2001 (Projected)	102,000	9.9		

Source: Data extracted from Annual Reports, Vital Statistics

Projections: Treasury and Economics

Table 6

Types of Families in Ontario

	1951 Census		1961
	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>
Total population	4,597,500		6,236,100
All families*	1,162,772	100.0	1,511,478
Husband and wife families with children	633,347	54.5	916,815
Husband and wife families - no children	420,061	36.1	475,531
Lone parent families with children	109,364	9.4	119,132
1. Female parent	81,349	79.0	95,305
2. Male parent	23,015	21.0	23,827

* Census Families

** Estimates:

In 1951, 1961, 1971 census, families with children were those with children age 24 and under. In 1976, children were defined as unmarried, regardless of age and residing with parents.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census data 1951, 1961, 1971, 1976

<u>Census</u>	<u>1971 Census</u>		<u>1976 Census</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>
		7,703,100		8,264,465
100.0		1,881,840	100.0	2,104,545
				100.0
60.6		1,118,650	59.5	1,251,100
				59.4
31.5		595,425	31.6	650,990
				31.0
7.9		167,765	8.9	202,450
				9.6
** (80.0)		133,885	(79.9)	168,450
				(83.2)
** (20.0)		33,880	(20.2)	34,000
				(16.8)

The average age of mothers at the birth of their first child has decreased slightly since 1951 when it was 24.5. In 1971, the average age was 23.3. Since then it has begun to edge up again slightly. This figure has been fairly constant over the years.

Table 7

Average Age of Mother at Birth of First Child 1951-1974

<u>Year</u>	<u>Average Age</u>
1951	24.5
1961	23.4
1971	23.3
1974	23.7

Source: Statistics Canada, Perspective Canada II, Table 2.2, p. 15

Traditionally one of the most difficult areas to examine is that of births out-of-wedlock. It is fraught with emotional and judgmental overtones. Recently recorded trends in births out-of-wedlock reveal some profound insights into the condition of society and its attitudes towards family life. From the early 1950's, births to unwed mothers increased in number and in proportion to all births until 1970. After that, births out-of-wedlock fell in number and in rate per thousand live births.

During the past few years, births out-of-wedlock have begun to increase, while the total number of live births per thousand of population has decreased. This means that the proportion of live births by unwed mothers has increased in relation to the number of births in wedlock. The increase can be explained by the increasing number of teenagers in the population.

More than half the out-of-wedlock births are

to women under the age of 20. The most striking change of all in this aspect of family life has been the increasing trend for unwed mothers to keep their children, rather than place them for adoption.

At the end of the 1960's, less than a third of unwed mothers kept their babies. Today more than 88% do so.

Table 8

Live Births to Unmarried Mothers

<u>Year</u>	<u>Births to Unwed Mothers</u>	<u>Rate per 1,000 Live Births</u>	<u>Proportion of Unwed Mothers Who Keep Their Children</u>
1968	9,463	75.0	30.1%
1969	9,802	75.2	30.1
1970	10,248	76.1	48.5
1971	8,492	65.1	52.1
1972	8,437	67.5	67.7
1973	8,285	66.9	70.3
1974	8,286	66.7	78.8
1975	8,816	70.0	80.6
1976	9,301	75.8	82.2
1977	9,608	78.3	88.3

Source: Ontario Vital Statistics, 1968-1977 Ministry of Community and Social Services Adult Services Program Policy.

Adoption

The trend of unwed mothers to keep their children has affected adoption in Ontario. The number of children available for adoption has decreased significantly. So has the number of these children who are infants. This has resulted in an impetus toward the adoption

of older children and children who would once be considered unadoptable.

Table 9

Children's Aid Society -Recorded Adoption Completions 1966-77

<u>Year</u>	<u>Placed by Society</u>	<u>Privately Placed</u>	<u>Adoption by Parent</u>	<u>Total</u>
1966	4,370	672	1,469	6,511
1967	4,459	676	1,761	6,896
1968	4,927	643	1,510	7,080
1969	5,394	692	1,766	7,852
1970	5,327	633	1,890	7,850
1971	4,756	495	1,994	7,245
1972	3,375	344	1,982	5,701
1973	2,997	513	2,154	5,664
1974	2,515	501	2,211	5,227
1975	2,065	425	2,481	4,971
1976	2,059	525	2,624	5,208
1977	1,739	603	2,735	5,077

Source: Child Welfare Branch, Ministry of Community and Social Services, Form 5 Yearly Reports, Children's Aid Societies of Ontario.

Note: These statistics collected by the Children's Aid Societies vary somewhat from those of the Records Unit, Ministry of Community and Social Services which records adoptions when all legal documents are received by the Ministry as in Table 10.

Since 1966, a decreasing proportion of the children adopted were children of unwed mothers. The percentage dropped from 74.1% in 1966 to 64.4% in 1973. Later

statistics are not available. The proportion of infants under one year old adopted increased to a peak in 1970 of 47.1% and then decreased to 32.6% in 1973. Adoptions of children in the one to three year age bracket also decreased from 1971 to 1973. Correspondingly, there was an increase in the adoption of older children, age 7 to 14. The figures rose from 14.4% in 1966 to 25.8% in 1973.

Table 10

Finalized Adoptions by Age Group of Children, Ontario, Per Cent 1966-1973

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>1966</u>	<u>1968</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>1971</u>	<u>1972</u>	<u>1973</u>
Under 1 year	38.1	39.7	47.1	43.2	39.2	32.6
1-3 years	31.3	32.3	22.7	23.3	18.7	19.1
4-6 years	11.2	10.5	10.7	11.7	14.1	15.0
7-14 years	14.4	13.2	14.8	16.6	21.1	25.8
15-20 years	3.8	3.2	3.5	4.0	5.4	5.9
21 and over	1.2	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.5	1.6

Total

Adoptions	6,543	7,157	7,740	7,126	5,880	5,822
-----------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------

Source: Child Welfare Branch, Ministry of Community and Social Services Records Unit.

Living in Families

In summary, one of the most surprising statistics about family formation is the increase in the percentage of people in Ontario who live in family situations. In 1951 there were 85.7% in families. By 1976, the percentage had grown to 86.2. Despite rumours to the contrary, the family as an institution is alive in Ontario.

Table 11

Ontario Population by Number of Families and Per Cent

	<u>1951</u>	<u>1976</u>	(Projection) <u>2001</u>
Total population	4,597,542	8,264,465	12,518,100
In families	3,941,473	7,124,635	
% in families	85.7%	86.2%	

Source: Statistics Canada, Census 1951 and 1976

Projection: See Table 14

FAMILIES GROW OLD

Life Expectancy

This is the most fundamental of all statistics, both from an individual and from a family point of view. Recently noted changes in life expectancy are having significant impact on family life. Examine the figures:

A male child born in 1951 could expect to live 66.9 years. By 1976 this expectation had risen to 70.3 - an increase of more than three years.

A female child born in 1951 could expect to live 71.9 years. By 1976 this had increased to 77.8 - an increase of almost six years.

This indicates that a married couple can look forward to a longer life together. Already this fact has been cited by authorities as one of the reasons for the incidence of divorce among older couples.

Before the turn of this century, couples could expect only a short married life. Women died in childbirth and infectious diseases and pneumonia took their toll. Today, many couples who choose to stay together may expect to celebrate their golden wedding anniversary.

It also means that women can expect to live seven and a half years longer than men of the same age. Increasingly, women can expect to be widowed and spend their last few years alone.

Table 12

Life Expectancy at Birth by Sex, Ontario

<u>Year</u>	<u>Life Expectancy in Years</u>	
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
1951	66.87	71.85
1961	68.32	74.40
1971	69.55	76.76
1976	70.30	77.80

Source: Statistics Canada, Canada Year Book 1976-77,
Table 4.47, p. 208

An Aging Population

Longer life expectancy means that greater numbers of those in Ontario can expect to live to enjoy their retirement years. Statistics show that those over 65 years of age make up a greater proportion of Ontario's population each year. Figures for the percentage of the population over the age of 85 are particularly significant in terms of health care and support services.

Table 13

Population of Ontario by Age Groups (per cent) for Selected Years

Age in Years	1951	1961	1971	1976	(Projected) 2001
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Under 15	27.0	32.5	28.7	25.1	16.9
15 - 29	23.0	20.2	25.4	27.5	19.7
30 - 49	27.4	26.1	24.6	24.4	32.6
50 - 64	13.9	12.9	16.9	14.0	17.2
65+	8.7	8.3	8.4	9.0	13.6

Source: Annual Reports, Vital Statistics, Province of Ontario (condensed)

Table 14

Population Dependency in Ontario by Selected Years

<u>Year</u>	<u>Age Group</u>	<u>% of Total Population</u>	<u>Total</u>
1951	under 15	27.0	35.7
	65+	8.7	
1961	under 15	32.5	40.8
	65+	8.3	
1971	under 15	28.7	37.1
	65+	8.4	
1976	under 15	25.1	34.1
	65+	9.0	
1986 (projected)	under 15	24.7	34.2
	65+	9.5	
2001 (projected)	under 15	16.9	30.7
	65+	13.6	

Source: Data extracted from Annual Reports, Vital Statistics, Province of Ontario and Statistics Canada, Perspective II, 1977.

Projections: Social and Economic Data Branch, Central Statistical Services, Ministry of Treasury and Economics

Table 15

Population of Ontario; 65 Years of Age and Over

	<u>1951</u>		<u>1961</u>	
	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
65 - 74	271,000	5.9	326,300	5.2
75 - 84	108,400	2.3	151,200	2.4
85+	20,900	0.5	30,500	0.5
<hr/>				
Total number of persons 65+, and percent of total Ontario population	400,300	8.7	508,000	8.1

Source: Census of Canada, 1951, 1961, 1971 and 1976
 Projection for 2001 - Ontario Ministry of Treasury
 and Economics

<u>1971</u>		<u>1976</u>		(Projected) <u>2001</u>	
<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
399,300	5.2	458,200	5.5	746,400	7.4
195,400	2.6	220,000	2.7	466,600	4.7
49,800	0.6	60,800	0.7	154,800	1.5
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
644,500	8.4	739,000	8.9	1,367,800	13.6

Table 16

Ontario Families in the Labour Force for Selected Years

	<u>1951 Census</u>		<u>1961</u>
	No.	%	No.
Total Families*	1,162,772	100	1,511,478
1. <u>In</u> Labour Force	1,079,490	92.8	1,309,599
2. <u>Not</u> in Labour Force	83,220	7.2	201,879
Total Husband and wife families*	1,053,408	100	1,392,346
1. <u>In</u> Labour Force	N/A		1,272,060
2. <u>Not</u> in Labour Force			120,286
Total Lone Parent Families	109,364	100	119,132
1. <u>In</u> Labour Force	N/A		37,539
2. <u>Not</u> in Labour Force			81,593
Total husband and wife families			1,272,060
In Labour Force	N/A		
1. Both Working			346,217
2. One working			925,843
Total husband and wife families with children up to 24 at home	N/A		N/A
1. Both working			
2. One working			

*Disregarding children

** Total different in other census data
 Difference unexplained

Source: Statistics Canada, Census Data, 1951, 1961, 1971 and 1976.

<u>Census</u>			<u>1971 Census</u>		<u>1976 Census</u>	
%	No.	%	No.	%		
100	1,877,055	100	2,104,545	100		
86.6	1,623,553	86.5	1,714,070	81		
13.4	253,502	13.5	390,475	19		
100	1,709,290	100	1,903,950	100		
91.4	1,520,545	89	1,600,185	84		
8.6	188,745	11	303,765	16		
100	167,765	100	202,450	100		
31.5	103,008	61.4	113,885	56.2		
68.5	64,759	38.6	88,565	43.8		
100	1,520,545	100	1,600,185	100		
27.1	725,630	47.7	866,420	54.1		
72.9	794,915	52.3	733,770	45.9		
	N/A		1,749,525	100		
			839,772	48		
			909,753	52		

In 1951, 1961, 1971 census, families with children were those with children age 24 and under. In 1976, children were defined as unmarried, regardless of age and residing with parents.

FAMILIES IN THE WORK FORCE

Who Works?

Most families are supported by members who work. Work takes up a large proportion of the time of Ontario's adult population. Conditions at work and wages undoubtedly affect families. A recent phenomenon related to work is the number of families in which both husband and wife are working. Statistics from the census of 1961, 1971 and 1976 show that the number of families in which both husband and wife were working increased from 27% in 1961 and 48% in 1971 to 54% in 1976.

Of course, not everyone finds employment. The 1978 Annual Review of Labour Market Conditions in Ontario, which was undertaken by the Ministry of Labour indicates that female heads of households had an unemployment rate of 10.1%; male heads had a rate of 3.5%. Among unemployed women, at least 10% are heads of households.

Working Women

The number of wives and mothers in the work force has increased dramatically during the last twenty years.

The number of wives working in Ontario has doubled within 15 years. As a result of changing financial needs and different attitudes toward the roles of women, more wives are working outside the home. This has profound implications for the care of children, the elderly and handicapped. Some families must turn to the community and to public institutions for services once provided exclusively within families.

Not only wives but mothers are increasingly employed. In Ontario in 1967, of all women with children, 25% were employed. Five years later, this figure had jumped to 40%.

Very significant is the number of mothers working whose children are of school age. In 1967, 32% of mothers with children all of school age were working. By 1976 the figure had risen to 44.5%, almost half. This has importance to the assessment of the care for young children.

FAMILY BREAKUP—THE FIGURES AND FACTS

Divorce

The increasing incidence of divorce is the most commonly quoted statistic about family life. It is the single most frequently cited example of the passing of the family as an institution. And yet beyond the gross figures there lie some indications that family life is remaining remarkably stable. Examine first the statistics:

Divorce in Ontario has risen from 3.3 per 100,000 of population in 1921 to 224.9 in 1976 and has continued to rise since that last census.

In 1976 there were 69,364 marriages in Ontario and 18,589 divorces. The ratio of divorces to new marriages was approximately 1 to 4. Statistics about divorce indicate that it occurs most commonly between the fifth and ninth years of marriage, then between the tenth to fourteenth years. If a marriage survives 20 years, its chance of breaking up decreases significantly.

The current Divorce Act came into effect in Canada in 1968. The divorce rate has remained high since then. In 1976, a geographic survey of divorce indicates its incidence is lowest in Newfoundland (76 per 100,000), next lowest in Prince Edward Island (98.1 per 100,000), highest in B.C. (333.7 per 100,000) and next highest in Alberta (309.9 per 100,000).

The pessimistic view of marriage breakup is that one in four marriages will not last. However, the reverse is also equally true. Three-quarters of Ontario marriages last. There is no doubt that family stability is still prized in Ontario and the majority of couples manage to live together throughout their lives.

Table 17

Divorces and Rates in Ontario 1921-1976

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Rate per 100,000 Population</u>
1921	96	3.3
1929	207	6.2
1939	752	20.3
1941	2,514	57.4
1951	2,109	45.9
1961	2,739	43.9
1962	3,140	49.4
1963	3,237	49.9
1964	3,508	52.9
1965	4,087	60.2
1966	4,101	58.9
1967	4,350	61.0
1968	5,036	69.3
1969*	11,845	160.4
1970	12,451	164.9
1971	12,211	158.5
1972	13,190	168.6
1973	13,781	173.6
1974	15,277	188.7
1975	17,485	212.6
1976	18,589	224.9

Source: Statistics Canada, Vital Statistics Vol II 1976, Catalogue 84-205 Annual, Table 11, pp 28-29

- * The jump in the 1969 divorce rate was due largely to passage of the Divorce Act (in force July 1, 1968). That Act greatly broadened the availability of divorce by widening the grounds on which a divorce can be granted.

Table 18

Divorces in Canada by Duration of Marriage 1973-1976

<u>Duration</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
1-4 years	29,427	15.7
5-9	53,901	28.9
10-14	33,485	18.0
15-19	24,482	13.1
20-24	18,850	10.1
25-29	13,213	7.1
30+	12,440	6.7
not stated	259	0.1
TOTAL	186,541	100.0

Source: Statistics Canada, Vital Statistics Vol II, Table 19, p.41

Table 19

Divorce: a Geographic Breakdown

Divorce rate per 100,000 in 1976

<u>Province</u>	<u>Rate</u>
Newfoundland	76.0
Prince Edward Island	98.1
Ontario	224.9
Alberta	309.9
British Columbia	333.7

Source: Statistics Canada, Vital Statistics Vol. II, 1976, Table 12, pp. 30-31

GOING IT ALONE

Single Parent Families

The result of the increase in divorces and of unwed mothers keeping their babies is the formation of more single-parent families in Ontario.

The 1976 census indicated 202,350 lone-parent families. This was 9.6% of all families in the province and accounted for 367,660 or 11.8% of all the children.

Two-thirds or 250,885 of the children in lone-parent families were under 18 years of age.

What are the emotional results? So far these have not been measured effectively. Many one-parent family children suffer less emotional stress than they did while living in a stressful home prior to the breakup of the marriage. Alternatively, there are many children who develop emotional difficulties.

What are the social results? In 1976, 83.2% of lone-parent families in Ontario were led by women.

By comparing the number of single-parent, female-headed families with children under 18 in June 1976 with government figures for women on social assistance that spring, one can determine that slightly more than half of these sole-support mothers were receiving public assistance. The total number of mothers with dependent children receiving assistance in Ontario in 1976 was more than 60,000. Clearly this figure is of major concern in any discussion of the family.

How well do those who manage without assistance make out? Figures from the Consumer Finance Survey of 1973 show that families with two parents have a higher income than single-parent families. Of those two parent families with only one parent working, only 11.2% earned less than \$5,000. However, in single-parent families, 45.3% earned less than \$5,000. Of single-parent families not in the labour force, 89.3% had incomes of less than \$5,000.

Table 20

**Number of Children (by age)
in Lone-Parent Families
in Ontario, 1976**

<u>Children</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Total children in lone-parent families	367,660	100.0
Under 6 years	52,250	14.2
6-14 years	140,960	38.3
15-17 years	57,675	15.7
18 or over	116,770	31.8
Total children under 18 years	250,885	68.2

Source: Statistics Canada, 1976 Census Microfiche No. SDAMB31

Table 21

Lone-parent Families by Number of Children, Ontario, 1976

<u>Families</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Total lone-parent families	202,350	100.0
Families with some children under 18		
1 child	67,885	33.5
2 children	41,680	20.6
3 children	17,905	8.8
4 or more	10,160	5.0
Total families with some children under 18	137,635	68.0
Total families with no children under 18	64,715	32.0

Source: Statistics Canada, 1976 Census Microfiche No.
SDAMB14

Table 22

Lone-parent Families Showing Marital Status by Sex of Parent, Ontario, 1976

<u>Marital Status</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
All	202,445	34,000	168,445
Married Spouse Absent	10,245	4,475	5,775
Separated	62,645	10,445	52,200
Widowed	74,825	11,780	63,050
Divorced	40,750	5,880	34,875
Unmarried	13,980	1,420	12,560

Source: Statistics Canada, 1976 Census of Canada
Microfiche No. CTFAMA24

The total number of lone-parent families differs slightly according to the source of data.

FAMILIES GETTING TOGETHER

Remarriage

In 1941, 99.0% of Ontario brides and 98.7% of Ontario grooms were previously unmarried. In 1976 these figures had fallen to 82.8% of brides and 81.9% of grooms.

The figures for widowed people remarrying has changed very little. The major change is in the number of divorced people remarrying.

Since many of these remarried people have children, the result has been what the sociologists have described as the "reconstituted family". In some cases, both partners bring children from a previous union, and sometimes produce children of their own.

Remarriage provides a new opportunity to build a good life as a family, but it also carries many possibilities for strife. Difficulties often stem from the relationship of the new spouse with the children his or her partner brings to the marriage. The children themselves often have trouble working out relationships with new step-parents when they still have mothers or fathers outside the marriage. Parents in reconstituted families need skill and patience to make the new arrangement work.

Table 23

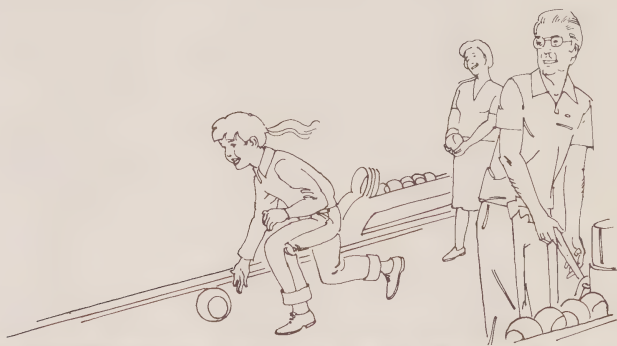
Marriages by Marital Status of Brides and Grooms (per cent) for Selected Years

<u>Year</u>	<u>Grooms</u>		<u>Brides</u>	
1951	never married	90.7	never married	90.6
	widowers	5.2	widows	5.6
	divorced	4.1	divorced	3.8
1961	never married	90.2	never married	89.5
	widowers	5.0	widows	5.7
	divorced	4.8	divorced	4.8
1971	never married	86.4	never married	86.3
	widowers	3.8	widows	4.5
	divorced	9.8	divorced	9.2
1976	never married	81.9	never married	82.8
	widowers	3.6	widows	4.1
	divorced	14.5	divorced	13.1

Source: Annual Reports, Vital Statistics, Province of Ontario

Also: Statistics Canada, Vital Statistics Vol. II 1976, Cat. 84-205 Annual, Table 7, p. 21

THE FAMILY AND GOVERNMENT



WHAT IS HAPPENING OUTSIDE CANADA?

To give perspective to a discussion about families in Ontario, it is worthwhile to look beyond our provincial and national boundaries to other countries.

France

France has its Code de la Famille, introduced in 1939. This outlines the legal position of French families. Consultative, administrative and representative bodies concerned with family well-being have been established. In France, a family is defined in law by the presence of dependent children of French nationality. Family policies are concerned with this basic legal entity. The Code seeks to reinforce the family by regulating economic relationships while, at the same time, setting

out the rights and duties of parents and children. The Code deals also with the adoption and legitimization of children.

Great Britain

The Labour government in Great Britain, before its recent dissolution, announced plans to create a Ministry of Marriage. This body would be responsible for co-ordinating the work of groups involved in marriage guidance and would conduct research into why families break up. The same government also initiated studies into violence in families.

The Conservative Party in Great Britain, before coming to power in a recent election, issued a discussion paper on family policy. Its objectives are to define a policy for making families more confident in their function and to secure official recognition of the work of families in rearing children. The overall aim is to establish recognition of the central importance of the family in social policy.

Aspects of the discussion paper include: family support, working parents, maternity, resuming a career, education, housing, juvenile delinquency and the elderly.

United States

There is no formally adopted family policy in the United States of America and there is reluctance to establish one. The diversity of the United States, the complexity of its social problems and its flexible planning approach all militate against a uniform policy.

There are, however, numerous organizations which address family issues. Most notable is the Carnegie Council on Children. In addition, there is a long-standing National Council on Family Relations in the United States. At its 40th annual meeting last fall, this body addressed such issues as counselling services, education, family action programs and theories on families.

WHAT IS HAPPENING IN CANADA?

In Canada, the Vanier Institute of the Family was incorporated in April 1965. It was the outcome of the Canadian Conference on the Family which Governor General Vanier had sponsored less than a year earlier. It is the only organization addressing family issues which has a national scope. It has a private endowment and for special projects is supported financially by the federal government. It is primarily a research and educational institute.

In April 1979, the Canadian Council on Social Development convened a conference in Ottawa on family policy. The conference studied the development of social policies affecting families in a number of countries. A series of workshops were held in order to address issues of family policy in Canada relating to housing, income security, personal social services, health and social justice programs.

In British Columbia, residents have demonstrated a depth of community-initiated concern for families. During 1975, meetings and workshops were held by church groups and other local organizations. Participants discussed issues affecting families. These regional meetings resulted in resolutions which were discussed at the British Columbia Conference on the Family in November 1976. A major achievement of this conference was the creation of the British Columbia Council for the Family. Its objectives centre on healthy growth and development of families and on understanding the nature and the place of the family in modern society. It also acts as a clearing house of information about families and family programs.

WHAT IS HAPPENING IN ONTARIO?

In recent years, the Ontario Government has shown a growing interest in families and their needs. The month of May has been designated as "Family Unity Month" by official proclamation. In May 1977, the

Honourable Margaret Birch, Provincial Secretary for Social Development, convened a seminar on the family in today's society. Its title: "Think about the Family".

In her opening statement, Mrs. Birch said:

"...Government programs are usually intended to meet the needs of groups of people, such as children or the aged. However, the implication of these programs for the family cannot be ignored. Moreover, the role of the family in meeting its own responsibilities must be considered."

At the seminar, many family issues were identified as worthy of consideration by government when formulating policies and programs.

One concern was the need to recognize that changing family and population trends could have a profound effect on government institutions. While selected indicators do not suggest there is a trend away from family life, there is an indication of changes in the functions of family members.

Other specific issues raised were:

- the possible use of part-time or flexible time employment to enable members of families to carry out family responsibilities;
- the provision of day care services, both for the young and the elderly, by government-sponsored programs or other alternative arrangements;
- the role and purpose of counselling and support services for adolescent mothers, parents of handicapped children and members of their extended families; and the examination of government's relationship to these;

- . the role of family life instruction in the classroom.

During the last year, the Ontario government has taken some major steps which relate directly to the family. First is the passage of The Family Law Reform Act, 1978. This came into effect as a response to the growing concern of the public for laws regulating property rights and support obligations between married people and other family members. The new law reflects prevalent concepts of the appropriate roles of the sexes and of fair distribution of family property and income. The preamble to The Family Law Reform Act of 1978 states:

"...it is desirable to encourage and strengthen the role of the family in society;

...it is necessary to recognize the equal position of spouses as individuals within marriage and to recognize marriage as a form of partnership;

...it is necessary to provide in law for the orderly and equitable settlement of the affairs of the spouses upon the breakdown of the partnership; and to provide for other mutual obligations in family relationships."

In establishing its priorities for 1978, the Children's Services Division of the Ministry of Community and Social Services emphasized the family and the desirability of maximizing the strengths of families in coping with potential problems. A task force has been established on the prevention of problems by developing supportive programs for families in high risk situations. In addition, the Ministry recently announced initiatives, including additional funding, for establishing some programs and improving others related to children.

The Ministry of Health, in November 1978, established

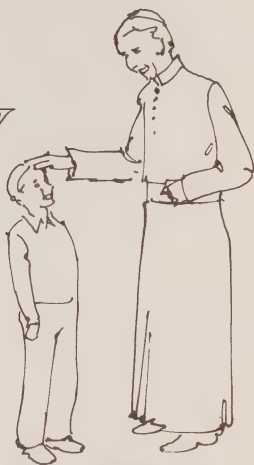
a unit which deals with "family health". Many other government ministries have policies and legislation that influence family life in Ontario. The necessity of looking more closely at families becomes clear.

In 1978, an Interministerial Committee on Families was established with permanent representation from eight ministries: Attorney General, Community and Social Services, Culture and Recreation, Education, Health, Housing, Labour, Treasury and Economics, the Secretariat for Social Development and the Youth Secretariat.

It reports to the Honourable Margaret Birch, Provincial Secretary for Social Development.

One of the roles of the Committee is to provide information to the public about what the Government of Ontario is doing for families. A compendium of programs, legislation and activities which the government provides in relation to families is being prepared and will be available to the public in the fall of 1979. In addition, the Committee has responsibility for the collection of statistics and demographic information about families in Ontario.

THE FAMILY AND THE COMMUNITY



Voluntary organizations of many kinds have been established to help individuals and families.

At first, most of these organizations were affiliated with religious institutions. Today they cover a much wider spectrum but for the most part have one important quality in common: all are dependent in large part on volunteer staffing as well as on contributory non-government funding.

The value of this type of assistance cannot be over-emphasized. The cost of replacing help so freely given by so many interested people would be an intolerable burden on the public purse.

It is with the utmost appreciation of the value of all the work done by all the organizations involved that the following short summary has been compiled. It makes no attempt to itemize the services provided by each group or even to identify groups. To do so would go beyond the needs of this paper as a starting

place for discussion on the family.

The organizations involved fall under the following generic headings:

- Religious Institutions
- Program Agencies
- Volunteer Organizations
- Self-help Groups
- Business and Labour
- The Media

In addition, part of the arsenal of available help to families comes under the loose heading of "professional people". While this is not of itself an organization, it includes the doctors or nurses who treat the family as an organism in its own right, offering appropriate medication and advice based on a knowledge of the working of the family group, its internal stresses and physical ailments. It includes lawyers who try, within their professional capacity, to sort out family conflicts or to minimize the friction between family members. The contribution of lawyers, sometimes with the assistance of legal aid, is a significant element in the business of keeping some families afloat.

There is also the impact of professional social workers or psychologists. These are often on the front line in the business of dealing with day-to-day problems of troubled families. They may be involved with families under the umbrella of a number of organizations.

This is a brief review of the types of family programs and other services offered by each of the groupings indicated previously:

RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

To family members in Ontario, the spiritual support provided by membership in a religious congregation is itself a powerful support in times of stress. On a secular level as well, the various religious groups provide practical assistance in many aspects of family life.

Perhaps the most emphasized element of this

support is marriage preparation and counselling. Most religious groups provide the assistance needed to put the expectations of marriage on a sensible plane. They also offer assistance in defusing marital problems where possible through counselling services.

Many also offer care of various kinds for children as well as advice for parents.

These and many other services stretch out in a network which permeates our society at every level.

PROGRAM AGENCIES

These agencies cover many aspects of family life. To give but a couple of the most obvious examples, consider the Children's Aid Societies and the Family Service Agencies.

Children's Aid Societies, acting under the authority of provincial legislation, carry out the functions of a collective conscience for society's dealings with children. Children's Aid workers supervise adoptions, and give advice to parents. The societies provide preventative and social services, foster and group homes, counselling on child abuse and assistance to unmarried mothers. In many ways this government-funded agency provides a safety net for children who need protection.

Family Service Agencies provide professional help largely in the area of counselling. They intervene on behalf of family members where objectivity and a proper understanding of problems can expedite an appropriate solution. Their family life education programs are designed to strengthen family life and their involvement in community work stems from a desire to foster good neighbourhoods for families to live in.

VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATIONS

This is an area of society where the goodwill of concerned people is harnessed into support on a contributory basis. Volunteer groups carry out many essential functions

in the relationship between society and the family.

Volunteers get together for many reasons. Many organizations are supported largely by women. The groups reflect the wide areas of interest Ontario women have: some belong to auxiliaries in religious institutions or hospitals; some belong to study groups which address important topics such as home economics, family health, agriculture and human welfare; others belong to groups whose purpose is the promotion of women's rights and the economic advancement of women; some work in co-operative groups with local education systems; others centre their work around improving the care of children, the handicapped or mentally retarded.

Senior citizens often use their increased free time profitably in helping others. Some belong to groups dedicated to bettering the lot of senior citizens; others provide a whole range of services for those who need assistance and comfort.

Men's groups cannot be forgotten. Naturally much of their work is similar to that of the volunteer groups discussed. As well, as in most volunteer groups, fund-raising is a necessary and important pursuit.

This is just a sampling of types of volunteer organizations, to give a flavour of the wealth of volunteer commitment in Ontario.

SELF-HELP GROUPS

An old axiom says that until you've walked a mile in another's shoes, you can't know what he's experiencing. That is the underlying philosophy in the vast number of self-help groups which contribute to the support of the family.

Many self-help groups respect the members' anonymity. They give people experiencing problems the latitude of talking privately in the company of those who have similar concerns. Chapters of these organizations often have family sessions.

Other groups are not conducted anonymously

but join together individuals, who through circumstance, have mutual interests. Examples are single-parent groups that share the special problems and rewards a parent may experience in raising a dependent child alone. Another example is self-help groups for women in receipt of social assistance. These women give moral support and a sympathetic ear for those experiencing financial problems. They also promote a sense of purpose and self-worth which stimulates individual women to widen their abilities and achieve independence.

Many other examples of self-help groups are available but the ones mentioned clearly indicate the important place they have in helping families help themselves.

BUSINESS AND LABOUR

The pairing of these two entities, and their listing under the heading of family support, may raise questions of their philosophical compatibility.

The intent, in pairing them, is to indicate the importance to the average family of that aspect of life commonly called "work". Most families are supported by those members who work.

Business

In the past, businesses had many policies which affected family life, sometimes beneficially, sometimes adversely. For instance, the question of prohibiting members of the same family from working within the same company was a common policy. This has recently been re-examined by many companies, with resulting benefits for affected family members.

The movement of wage-earners or the necessity for some wage-earners to travel away from home raises other family considerations. Increasingly, this too is being reviewed by employers.

Many larger companies have pension and benefit

plans which bear on family life. Many have self-help programs on subjects such as alcoholism. These and all the other factors which impinge on family life, make employment an important talking point in our discussion of the family in Ontario.

Labour

Organized labour also has made an impact on family life. The provision of health plans and general benefits to union members has been directly supportive of many families in Ontario. For example, several unions have implemented drug and alcohol programs, medical health centres, and benefits for widows and orphans. Similarly, labour's desire to better working conditions has helped to assure families of the continuing health and well-being of their working members.

THE FAMILY AND THE UNKNOWN INFLUENCE: THE MEDIA

The family cannot be considered without taking into account the influence of the news and entertainment media. Its impact on family life is curiously ambivalent.

For example, on one hand, the presence of television in the home has contributed to an increased amount of time being spent in the home, among the family. Alternatively, the time spent in front of television is largely isolated time. Family activities or discussions do not flourish while the television is on.

One major question, still unresolved despite a large amount of study, is the influence exerted upon individuals, and hence families, by television programs and commercials. The most pertinent data is available from the Royal Commission Report on the Effects of Violence on Television. The Commission reports fill seven volumes and are impossible to summarize within this paper. However, its findings, plus all other considerations of the impression gained of fictional family life, through situation comedy or commercial content, of awareness of public affairs, of perceptions

of family life inferred from media news, are all subjects for consideration in a deep discussion of the family today.

Naturally, television is not the only media influence. There are the books and magazines families read, as well as newspapers. Radio is a source of information for many. These all represent influences on families which cannot be quantified but cannot be ignored.

THE FAMILY AS A FOCUS FOR SOCIAL POLICY: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?



We have already recognized that the concept of "family" is a subjective one. Similarly, the assessment of the value of family support programs is likely to be equally subjective. One point is clear, however; the family is our most important social institution. As such, it must be the focus of social policy for Ontario. The unique strengths of Ontario's families must be preserved.

When we talk about social policy, it is not only the policies of government and its agencies that are relevant. Government is not the only element in policy formulation, although its important role cannot be denied. The impact of religious institutions, volunteer groups, service agencies, business or labour must be considered.

Before any changes are made to accommodate families, a thoughtful review of the needs of families is necessary. Which programs, community, volunteer, private or government, will strengthen the family?

What do families want and what do they say about themselves? What will focussing on families in social policy mean to families?

In order to encourage families to talk about families and social policies, the use of certain points for discussion would be helpful. Suggestions made are meant to be a sampling of the ideas about the relationship between families and social policies.

Social Policies In Relation To Families Should:

- encourage the basic social and economic independence of families through maintaining the responsibilities of individual family members;
- encourage the stability of family units;
- protect the rights of individual family members within families;
- encourage the role of families in passing on moral values, culture and language to children;
- strengthen the capacity of families to perform nurturing functions for family members;
- respect the many types of family life;
- encourage families to find their own solutions to problems by providing information and opportunities for choice in the pursuit of the goals and objectives of individual families.

These thoughts could be expanded to deal with concrete instances of policies, programs or legislation affecting families. Families can relate these ideas to their own experiences.

One goal of this paper is to stimulate thought

and discussion, perhaps in greater depth and detail than was possible before. Those who read this paper are asked to pass it along to friends and neighbours and air with them issues affecting families.

The next step will be taken by the Government of Ontario. The Honourable Margaret Birch, Provincial Secretary for Social Development and His Honour Judge Guy Goulard of the Ontario Welfare Council plan to convene a seminar in September of 1979. The purpose of this seminar is to air issues related to families and to design a province-wide discussion about families. A wide spectrum of organizations which assist families will be invited to attend. People will be encouraged to involve themselves in discussions at their own local level, either within their own organizations or in combination with other groups. Future plans can be finalized at the September seminar.

Non-government institutions such as religious groups and volunteer provincial organizations will be invited to give a description of their own programs so that all the available information may be shared.

The outcome of this open exchange of information and opinions by concerned parties will be Ontario's first commonly decided forum for social review and discussion aimed exclusively at the family.

Those who get involved in this process will have much to think about and to work for. The families of Ontario will reap the benefits.

NOTES

Additional copies are available from:

Ontario Government Book Store
880 Bay Street at Grosvenor
Toronto, M7A 1N8



3 1761 11468965 6